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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3002
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RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2161
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0226
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 4522
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 6625
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 000791

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/15/2016

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKAN TRUCE MONITORS TELL SCA PDAS CAMP THEY
DOUBT LTTE TARGETED TROOP CARRIER

REF: A. USDAO COLOMBO IIR 6 186 0081 06

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 713

Classified By: CDA JAMES F. ENTWISTLE. REASON: 1.4 (B,D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) In a May 15 meeting with Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Camp and

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Charge', members of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) said that the Mission plans to resume naval monitoring as soon as possible. In SLMM's view, the May 11 Sea Tiger attack against Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) patrol craft demonstrates Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) efforts to assert purported rights to (unspecified) territorial waters, rather than an LTTE plot to target an unarmed troop carrier, as reported in the local press. End summary.

LTTE PRESSING CLAIMS TO MARITIME RIGHTS

[1](#)2. (C) Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Camp, accompanied by Charge', met May 15 with Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) Chief of Staff Tommy Lekenmyr, Chief Operations Officer Mika Sorensen and SLMM officer Paul Erik Bjerke. PDAS Camp underscored U.S. support for SLMM efforts to monitor and maintain the truce under increasingly difficult and dangerous conditions. Sorensen provided a briefing on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) May 11 attack on Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) crafts (Ref A). Sorensen said the SLMM had received a letter from the Tigers a few weeks previously warning its monitors to stay off SLN crafts and received a second warning just a day before the May 11 attack. According to Sorensen, the Tiger communications complained of SLMM "bias" in its decision to provide monitoring on board SLN craft alone; to

be truly impartial the monitors should also join Sea Tiger patrols. The SLMM replied that its mandate clearly warranted its presence on board SLN craft and not/not LTTE vessels because the LTTE does not have territorial rights to the sea.

If the LTTE wants the SLMM to change its mandate to exclude monitoring on board SLN vessels, "it must opt out of the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) because that (exclusion) is not part of the CFA," Lekenmyr said firmly.

13. (C) Nonetheless, the LTTE continues to press claims to territorial rights at sea, the monitors said, even though it has never defined the boundaries of its purported territorial waters. Throughout the course of the CFA, the SLMM has observed Sea Tiger vessels, usually near the eastern shores of Trincomalee, Sorensen reported. Typically, the SLN will inform the SLMM of any Sea Tiger activity and deploy its own vessels to deter the LTTE from moving closer. Increasingly in the past few months, the Sea Tigers have been observed launching attack formations "just to scare" the SLN, the monitors reported. For the most part, the monitors said, these LTTE shows of strength had ended without confrontation.

(Note: Sea Tigers attacked and sank two other SLN Dvoras in separate incidents on January 7 in the waters off Puttalam District and on April 25 off Jaffna. End note.) On May 11 the SLN spotted a Sea Tiger flotilla of 16 crafts in waters farther north (near GSL Forward Defense Lines on the northeastern shore of Jaffna). The SLN informed the SLMM, which placed a naval monitor (and SLMM flag) on board an SLN Dvora, which, along with three other Dvoras, moved four or five nautical miles out to observe what the Sea Tigers were doing. Bjerke noted that the Sea Tiger vessels began rapidly closing in on the Dvoras at a surprisingly fast pace--much faster than the 35 knots that the SLN and SLMM had believed to be their maximum achievable speed. The Tiger flotilla included six suicide boats, one of which rammed an SLN Dvora

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(not carrying the SLMM monitor), sinking it.

TROOP CARRIER NOT LIKELY
TARGET, IN SLMM VIEW

14. (C) It is "quite clear" to SLMM that a SLN troop carrier with over 700 soldiers on board that was also at sea at the same time was not the target of the LTTE attack, Lekenmyr said. The Government is trying to make out that the Tigers planned to attack unarmed soldiers on the eve of a sacred Buddhist holiday, but that scenario seems unlikely, he argued. "To us, it's more like the LTTE saying they want to protect their territorial waters." The troop carrier, which runs daily from Trincomalee to Jaffna, was 30 nautical miles away from shore and "never that close" to the engagement, the monitors noted, adding that it would have been easier for the Sea Tigers, if the troop carrier were indeed its objective, to attack the larger vessel when it was closer to shore near Trincomalee. In fact, Lekenmyr reported, an SLMM monitor on board the troop carrier was never even aware of the Dvora/Sea Tiger engagement until the larger vessel moved out to open seas to avoid any possible confrontation. Someone inside the SLN must be feeding the Tigers information, Bjerke speculated, since the LTTE has access to information like individual Dvoras' pennant numbers, which are not displayed on the vessels and are thus only (presumably) known to those in the security forces.

15. (C) In the aftermath of the May 11 incident, the SLMM has requested all of its naval monitors to return to Colombo for consultations. Lekenmyr emphasized that the suspension of naval monitoring was temporary only and that the monitors planned to return to their duties as soon as possible, "maybe this week."

16. (C) The SLMM monitors confirmed they had received LTTE complaints that Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) security forces

bombed sites in the LTTE-controlled northern district of Kilinochchi (including, reportedly, the airstrip at Iranamaddu). When the SLMM requested the LTTE to arrange a visit to the sites so that monitors could document the complaint, however, the LTTE demurred, saying it was "not ready," Lekenmyr said. (Note: The LTTE said the same thing when SLMM requested access to all Tiger sites reportedly hit in GSL aerial strikes April 25-26.)

KARUNA CHANGING DYNAMIC OF CONFLICT

¶7. (C) Besides the Tigers flexing their maritime muscles, the SLMM has noted other recent changes in the conflict. In particular, the emergence of the Karuna faction as a military and potential political counterweight to the Tigers has altered the dynamic in significant ways, the monitors indicated. The LTTE is likely resorting to increased violence because of the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) failure to restrain the Karuna faction, Sorensen theorized. In another dramatic departure from its usual practice, the LTTE took responsibility for its April 30 attacks on Karuna camps (Ref B), Sorensen noted (although the Defense Secretary denied SLMM access to the eight Karuna wounded warded at Polonnaruwa Hospital following the attack). The absence of a Forward Defense Line in the east makes it easy for Karuna militants to operate, Bjerke said, adding that members of the dissident faction were becoming more visible in the east and may have dislodged the LTTE from some of its territory in Trincomalee. Karuna might have a lot of supporters in the east, Bjerke commented. Lekenmyr said that he doubted that the GSL could disarm the Karuna faction, even if it wanted to. Recognizing this, the SLMM has told the GSL "at least don't support him," Lekenmyr said.

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¶8. (U) PDAS Camp has cleared this message.
ENTWISTLE